

# Minority Students in the Montessori Classroom

Aleesha Young  
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# What is the Montessori Philosophy?

- Focuses on child centered self-directed learning
- Encourages children to interact and work cooperatively with their peers
- Motivation comes from within
- Motivated to do work because the activities in the classroom interest them

# Research Questions

- What aspects of the Montessori Method contribute to the motivation of minority students in the classroom?
- How do teachers and parents perceive the motivation of these students?

# Literature on Montessori Schools

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Is the Montessori Magnet School Effective?

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## Rathunde (2005) Middle School Students' Motivation and Quality of Education: A Comparative Study: A Comparison of Montessori and Traditional School Environments

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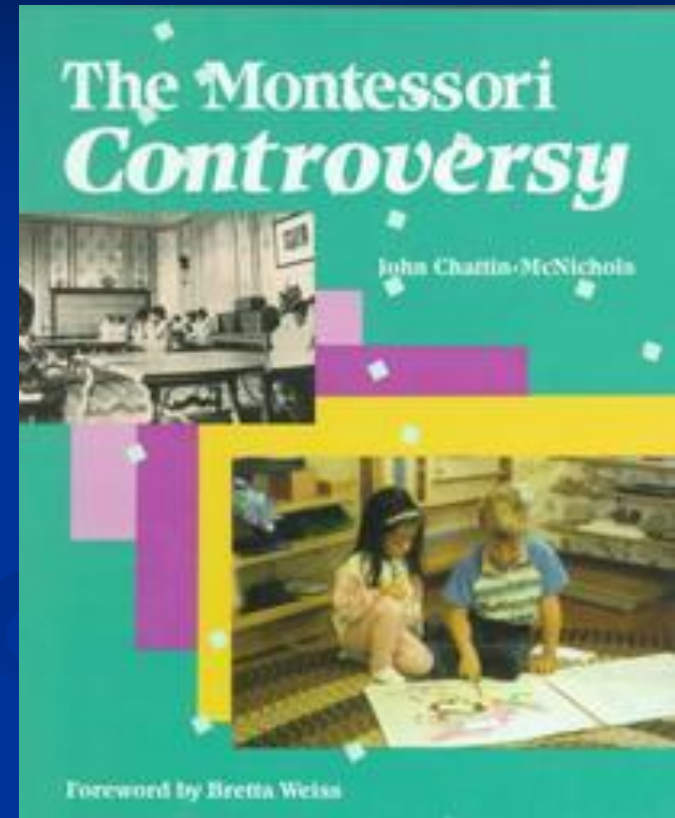
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Speaks to the fact that public Montessori schools are able to attract inner-city parents who may not be able to afford private Montessori schools. Briefly addresses aspects of the Montessori Method that motivates children.

# Significance

- An achievement gap exists between minority students and their white counterparts; motivation contributes to academic performance
- Academic motivation begins to decrease in middle school
- Unfavorable consequences of low motivation for minority students

# Methods

- **Observations:** Montessori Magnet School in Hartford

Upper Elementary Classroom (9-12)

MOTIVATION: Showing an interest or willingness to complete school work

-Informal conversations with students

- **Interviews:** 6 Teachers

6 Parents



# Thesis

- A major aspect of the Montessori Method that influences motivation among minority students (in this study) appears to be the routine of working completing independently. This practice also appears to be related students' knowledge of the expectations of the teacher.
- The way teachers interpret motivation is related to what students are exposed to outside of the classroom or perceptions of those exposures.
- For parents, this motivation is associated with their child's interests in academic tasks without an incentive.

# Motivation of Minority Students

## Lower Elementary Classroom

- Girl working on a pronunciation task

“I am working on sounding out the words like I always do. I already know what to do. Mrs. Adams doesn’t have to tell me because she would say I should be able to do it by myself.”

## Upper Elementary Classroom

- Boy working on a math puzzle

“I don’t even like math. I wanted Chris to help me but Mr. Jones always reminds us to work on everything alone first.”

# Teacher's Perspectives

Q: How would you describe the motivation of minority students in your classroom?

- Primary Elementary Teacher

“... my white students perform better and may be more motivated than my black and Hispanic students. It has to do with having parents who are willing to participate. White parents they take their children everywhere, while black and Hispanic parents cannot necessarily afford to do that.”

# Teacher's Perspective

Q: How would you describe the motivation of minority students in your classroom?

- Lower Elementary Teacher

“I don’t know if there is anything I can say about race. I am sure there is some correlation. We tell parents to read to their children at home, but regardless, the children who turn in their forms are the ones who are already doing great. All parents should be reading to their children.”

# Parent Perspectives

Q: How effective is the Montessori method in motivating your child?

“My child loves it. Anything that she does not know she is determined to study. She wants to learn her numbers at home.”

“I don’t think it is the method because we don’t see a result from curiosity. At home she does not show a heightened interest in educational tasks without a reason to or if she is interested she does not necessarily try to dig deeper.”